

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 751

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Joe “Tiger Joe”
Thompson, Jr. of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the citizens of Tennessee have, throughout the years, been called upon to take up arms against the enemies of this great nation, risking their lives and leaving their loved ones behind to safeguard the freedoms and liberties guaranteed to all citizens of these United States and vanquishing those who threaten our way of life; and

WHEREAS, while the heroic deeds of Tennesseans have been extolled throughout the history of our state and nation, the distinguished military service of each and every proud Tennessean should be illuminated, shared, and properly honored, especially those veterans who served during World War II; and

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of one such individual, Joe “Tiger Joe” Thompson, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Thompson was a highly decorated World War II veteran, exemplary citizen, and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, he served with acumen and alacrity as a financial representative with Northwestern Mutual for sixty-five years, the longest run in the 143-year history of the Nashville branch, earning him the respect and admiration of both his colleagues and clients; and

WHEREAS, a loyal veteran of the United States Army Air Force, Mr. Thompson valiantly served as an aerial reconnaissance pilot during World War II, first with the 66th Squadron of the British Royal Air Force and later with the 109th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron of the U.S. 9th Air Force; and

WHEREAS, while deployed with the 9th Air Force, Mr. Thompson flew ninety missions in a P-51 Mustang Spitfire, photographing Omaha Beach just two days before the D-Day invasion and documenting Nazi troop movements during the Battle of the Bulge; and

WHEREAS, he quickly ascended to the rank of major, before becoming the commanding officer of the 109th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron; and

WHEREAS, in honor of his heroic feats, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguished Unit Badge, and the Air Medal with fifteen oak leaf clusters from the United States as well as the Croix de Guerre (Cross of War) and recently the Legion of Honor, both from France; and

WHEREAS, established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, the National Order of the Legion of Honor is the country's highest honor, equal to knighthood, and recognizes eminent service to the French Republic; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his reconnaissance photography, Mr. Thompson took nearly 600 photographs documenting the lives of Allied soldiers, now housed in the Nashville Room Collection of the Nashville Public Library, and his work was featured in exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic, some of which appeared in the 2006 publication *Tiger Joe: A Photographic Diary of a World War II Aerial Reconnaissance Pilot*; and

WHEREAS, a significant figure in our Nation's history, Mr. Thompson shared his unique experiences and observations of the War with the students of Montgomery Bell Academy for sixteen years, bringing the past to life with his masterful storytelling; and

WHEREAS, Tiger Joe Thompson descended from a long line of Nashvillians, starting with his great-great-grandfather, Thomas Thompson, who signed the Cumberland Compact and received a Revolutionary War land grant of 640 acres, on which he built the ancestral home and Joe's eventual birth site, Glen Leven; and

WHEREAS, the young Thompson attended Robertson Academy, and, as a teenager, earned his lifelong nickname "Tiger Joe" for the tenacious spirit he exhibited in a boxing match at summer camp; and

WHEREAS, upon graduating from Wallace School in 1937, Mr. Thompson became a pre-medicine major, completing his undergraduate degree at Vanderbilt University, where he was chapter president of Phi Delta Theta; and

WHEREAS, "Tiger Joe" Thompson has been an active member of the community through various organizations, including serving as an elder and Sunday School teacher at First Presbyterian Church for twenty years, chairman of United Givers Fund (United Way), trustee for Harpeth Hall School and the M. Stratton Foster Charitable Foundation, and one of only three life members of The Salvation Army's Nashville Area Command Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, he also served as member of the Cockrill Society of United Way, chairman of the YMCA Capital Funds Drive, head of the Girl Scouts Sustaining Membership Drive, and president for the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, Nashville Rotary, Vanderbilt Alumni Association, Monroe Harding Children's Home, and the Children's Museum; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to honors and accolades, Mr. Thompson received the 1991 Lifetime Board Member Award for his many years of service with The Salvation Army, the Alexis de Toqueville Award from United Way, the Crowning Achievement Award from Senior Citizens, and the Victor Johnson Award from the Nashville Tree Foundation for his tree planting advocacy with the Old Oak Literary Club; and

WHEREAS, a loving and devoted son, Tiger Joe Thompson was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Florence Fondé Thompson; and

WHEREAS, he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Martha Crook Thompson, for sixty-four blissful years and was the proud father of Mindy Orman and her husband, Scott; Fondé Werts and her husband, Steve; Joseph H. Thompson and his wife, Jean; and Celeste Crouch and her husband, Jim; and

WHEREAS, his memory will be forever cherished by his nine grandchildren, Martha Grace, Alice, and Will Orman; Charlie Werts and Lucy Day Werts Hobor and her husband, Aquinas; Christine and Joseph H. Thompson, Jr.; and Caroline and Sarah Joy Crouch; and

WHEREAS, the family of this great patriarch is most appreciative of his dedicated and compassionate caregivers, Matthew Cooper, Brenda Dotson, Fran Hernandez, Olive Kallon, Scott Stringer, and Alive Hospice; and

WHEREAS, Tiger Joe Thompson leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Joe "Tiger Joe" Thompson, Jr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Thompson.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.